



# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Media Contact:  
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 1, 2023

### Navajo Nation Council members speak in support of Utah's Indigenous relatives missing persons task force



**PHOTO:** Council Delegate Curtis Yanito speaks before the Utah Senate Health and Human Services Standing Committee in support of House Bill 25 in Salt Lake City, Utah on Jan. 31, 2023.

**SALT LAKE CITY, UT** – This week, 25th Navajo Nation Council members, along with Navajo Nation First Lady Jasmine Blackwater Nygren, spoke in support of Utah House Bill 25, which seeks to extend the establishment of Utah's Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Task Force. The bill would also rename the group to be known as the "Murdered and Missing Indigenous Relatives Task Force."

The bill, sponsored by Utah State Rep. Angela Romero (D-Dist. 26), was heard by the Senate Health and Human Services Standing Committee on Tuesday, where Speaker Crystalyne Curley, First Lady Blackwater

Nygren, and Council Delegates Curtis Yanito and Germaine Simonson spoke about the importance of prioritizing missing persons cases among tribal communities through the extension of the task force that was first created in 2020 and is set to expire in November of this year.

“According to the Urban Indian Health Institute, the state of Utah and the City of Salt Lake are in the top 10 for missing indigenous persons. It is important to build upon strong networks to support the efforts to identify, report, and find missing Indigenous persons and increase support for families and survivors. Working together with the task force, we continue to address missing persons issues, including the need to close gaps where missing persons cases often fall into, identifying jurisdictional misinterpretations, fostering coordination among tribal nations, and developing innovative strategies to assist law enforcement,” stated Speaker Curley.

Delegate Simonson recalled a missing person case involving a young child in the region that she represents, which required resources that the state can provide for victims’ services with the support of the task force. First Lady Blackwater Nygren urged the state legislators to support the bill and noted that over 70-percent of missing persons cases on the Navajo Nation involve men.

On Wednesday, Council members continued meeting with members of the House Judiciary Committee to request support for House Bill 40 that would codify provisions of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in the state of Utah, providing much-need protection for Native American children and solidify federal standards for the removal of children and placement in homes that will reflect the unique values of Native American culture.



**PHOTO: 25<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council members with Navajo Nation First Lady Jasmine Blackwater Nygren at the Utah Senate Health and Human Services Standing Committee room in Salt Lake City, Utah on Jan. 31, 2023.**

The ICWA bill was one of 12 Utah legislative priorities approved by the 25th Navajo Nation Council on Jan. 25. Several of the other priorities include funding for an environmental impact study for improvements to a route between Navajo Mountain and Oljato, establishment of a high education facility in Montezuma Creek, funding for the Gentle Iron Hawk Shelter, protection of voting rights, broadband expansion for the Montezuma Creek-Aneth Community School, and others. The priorities were approved by the Council by a vote of 21-0.

###

For the latest news from the Navajo Nation Council, please visit <https://www.navajonationcouncil.org> or search for “Navajo Nation Council” on social media